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UNCLAS PARAMARIBO 000545

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [SOCI](#) [CH](#) [NS](#) [CHINA](#)

SUBJECT: CHINESE DELEGATION VISIT TO SURINAME: JUST REGULAR BUSINESS?

REFS: (A) PARAMARIBO 307, (B) 03 PARAMARIBO 421, (C) PARAMARIBO 270

1. In a July 22 conversation with the Embassy, Political Officer Yumin Zhao of the Chinese Embassy downplayed a recent visit by a delegation from the Peoples National Congress to Suriname. Zhao stressed that the July 6-9 visit was part of a regular orientation of Chinese government officials to the region -Q Suriname was the delegations' first stop on an introductory tour to seven countries. He added that the visit did not break new ground.

2. According to media reports, the delegation discussed the warm relations enjoyed between Suriname and China with Ram Sardjoe (Speaker of the National Assembly), Marie Levens (Foreign Affairs Minister), and Jules Ajodhia (then Acting President). Issues covered included the controversial Patamacca palm oil project (See Ref A), a road paving program, construction of a new Foreign Affairs building, the immigration and trafficking of Chinese to Suriname, and a reported \$18 million soft loan promised to President Ronald Venetiaan during his state visit to China last year. According to Minister of Trade and Industry Michael Jong Tjien Fa, the loan is earmarked for the construction of 1,000 houses in districts Wanica (population about 90,000) and Commewijne (population about 60,000) districts. In addition, Jong Tjien Fa credited the good relations between Suriname and China to the Chinese diaspora in Suriname -- Chinese first came to Suriname more than 150 years ago. For his part, Jiang Zhenghua, the head of the Chinese delegation, thanked Suriname for its support of the "one China" policy. (See Refs B and C for further details about Suriname-China relations.)

3. When asked for his take on the visit, President Ronald Venetiaan's personal secretary Hesdy Pigot dismissed rumors that Suriname will permit the immigration of a significant number of Chinese nationals. He emphasized that only the Chinese companies in charge of the proposed housing project will be able to bring in the necessary workers. These workers will return to China once the project is completed, he said. (Note: A credible source confided to the Embassy that, according to National Assembly members working on the state visit, the delegation explored the possible immigration of thousands of Chinese to Suriname. Embassy has been unable to date to confirm whether this in fact occurred. End Note)

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